

Immediate release
30 September 2016

Teachers, school nurses and health visitors 'have vital role in successful mental health strategy'

Children in Scotland has called for a clear and bold 10-year vision for improving children and young people's mental health, which positions prevention, promotion and support as everyone's business.

In its response to the Scottish Government's draft mental health strategy *Mental Health in Scotland – a 10 year vision* Children in Scotland recommends that addressing children's mental health requires a response that extends far beyond traditional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Instead, there should be more focus on addressing children and young people's social needs alongside their emotional and psychological ones.

Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy at Children in Scotland, said: "Our own consultation with Children in Scotland members revealed widespread concern that initial proposals by the Scottish Government were too narrow in their focus – and that they did little at present to recognise or address many of the social factors that can affect mental health, such as poverty and discrimination."

"Child and Adolescent Mental Health Specialists have a critical role to play, particularly in providing for those who have severe, complex needs, and they need to be properly funded. However, a huge amount of prevention and support work is carried out by professionals who are not mental health specialists, such as teachers, school nurses, health visitors and youth workers. They are interacting with children and young people day-to-day, building relationships and are best placed to spot issues as they develop. They also have an important part to play in terms of helping children and young people to understand what constitutes good mental health, and how this can be encouraged to flourish.

"It is absolutely vital that the Government's 10-year strategy for improving children and young people's mental health recognises the vital role of those working in universal services, as well as communities and families."

Children in Scotland also recommends that the strategy ensures children and young people are involved in its development and implementation, that the needs of particular 'at-risk' groups such as looked-after children and those with additional support needs are addressed, and that it is closely linked with other related policies that address wider social needs such as Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the new Child Poverty Bill for Scotland and social security reform.

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Notes for editors

Children in Scotland is the collective voice for children, young people and families in Scotland, and organisations and businesses that have a significant impact on children's lives in Scotland. It is an influencing and membership organisation, comprised of more than 500 representatives from the voluntary, public and private sectors.

The Scottish Government consulted on a draft strategy designed to transform mental health in Scotland. Read the full draft strategy *Mental Health in Scotland – a 10 year vision* **here**. Read Children in Scotland's response to the strategy **here**.

Other related policies referred to in this release are:

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

A national approach to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. Read more information **here**.

Child Poverty Bill for Scotland

The Scottish Government is consulting on proposals for a Child Poverty Bill for Scotland. Read the full consultation **here**.

Social Security Reform in Scotland

The Scottish Government is consulting on how best to use the new social security powers, which will be devolved by the Scotland Act 2016. Read the full consultation **here**.

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